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SUBJECT: MAURITIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE AND PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

REF: PORT LOUIS 307

¶1. SUMMARY. On September 12, a week earlier than expected, Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam confirmed that Sir Anerood Jugnauth's (SAJ) mandate as President will continue for five more years. One day later, on September 13, the Prime Minister announced a much-anticipated cabinet reshuffle. In addition to many reappointments, four new Ministers were sworn in (3 Hindu and 1 Creole) and one was demoted to Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. While the media speculates on what this signals for alliances in light of 2010 legislative elections, politicians remain quiet on the effects of these changes. END SUMMARY.

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PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT AND ALLIANCES  
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¶2. According to local press reports, advisers close to the Prime Minister admitted that the renewal of Anerood Jugnauth's presidential mandate was an attempt to undermine any MMM/MSM alliance possibility in light of upcoming legislative elections. Based on a Business Magazine survey published on April 2, an MMM/MSM alliance would have majority support of the population (Note: 31 percent for MMM/MSM against 25 percent for the Prime Minister's Social Alliance party. End of note).

¶3. MMM leader Paul Berenger, however, insists that appointing Anerood Jugnauth for a second presidential term will not affect any potential political alliance between MMM and MSM. MSM leader Pravind Jugnauth somewhat echoed these statements when he told the press that his party is happy with the decision but that it does not necessarily affect its chances for an alliance with MMM. On the other hand, local press also reported that Jugnauth privately expressed that he was pleased with the renewed interest shown towards his party by the Prime Minister.

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REACTION TO THE CABINET RESHUFFLE  
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¶4. As rumored for months, Ramgoolam made a number of changes to his cabinet, increasing the number of Ministers to 22 and moving Etienne Sinatambou, former Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications, to the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly chair. He also decided to get rid of the Attorney General's additional ministerial portfolios to be in conformity with the constitution (see reftel). Ramgoolam claims that the cabinet reshuffle signals an era of modernity that seeks to be results- and community-oriented. Still, some have expressed reservations over the appointments, such as Creole leader, Father Jocelyn Gregoire, who expressed "frustration and anger" at the new total of 13 Hindu ministers.

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